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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 000112

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/06/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [BA](#) [IS](#) [REGION](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER CONFIRMS KENYAN-BAHRAINI RUNNER  
RETAINS CITIZENSHIP

REF: MANAMA 0034

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) In a February 6 meeting covering several subjects (septels), the Ambassador raised with Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa the early January incident involving Kenyan-Bahraini runner Musher Salem Jawher (Leonard Mucheru) and reports that the GOB had stripped him of his citizenship because of his participation in the Tiberias Marathon in Israel. Noting there had been contradictory stories in the press, the Ambassador asked for clarification.

Shaikh Khalid reiterated his comment from mid-January (reftel) that the GOB had handled the incident poorly. He confirmed that Jawher retains his Bahraini citizenship and said that press reports that the government had lifted his citizenship were wrong. Officials have told Jawher that if he participates in Bahrain's name, he must abide by Bahraini law. Shaikh Khalid said Jawher would compete in future events for Bahrain.

¶2. (C) In a separate conversation, EmbOff spoke with an official at the General Organization for Youth and Sports (GOYS), which oversees Bahrain's national and club athletic teams. The official said that GOYS and the Bahrain Athletics Association (BAA) had issued a statement in early January, as the story broke, saying that the government would withdraw Jawher's citizenship. The groups took this step "to avoid more criticism, particularly from the opposition in the parliament." He admitted that Jawher's citizenship had never actually been removed. The official commented that Jawher is a world-class athlete and GOYS and the BAA had invested heavily over the past two-and-a-half years in his training.

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